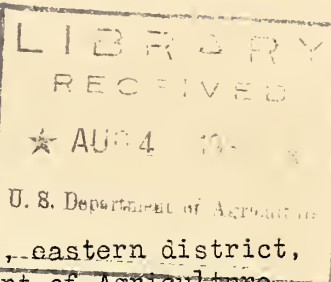


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Tuesday, July 15, 1930.



A series of radio talks by W. R. M. Wharton, chief, eastern district, Food, Drug and Insecticide Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m. Eastern Standard Time through WJZ, New York and the following other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company: KWK, St. Louis; WREN, Kansas City, KFAB, Lincoln; WRC, Washington; WBZA, Boston; KSTP, St. Paul; WSM, Nashville; WAPI, Birmingham, WJAX, Jacksonville; WPTF, Raleigh; WRVA, Richmond.

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Good morning, my radio friends! Your government representative, who tells you each week how your food and drugs are safe-guarded by the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act and who tells you how to read food and drug labels, is with you once more.

This is the 20th talk in my series. I have covered heretofore a large number of your every day food products and I have told you how to read their labels. You may have copies of this information for the asking.

My talk today will concern the deadly  
/Bacillus botulinus and how your food officials find him.

A person dies of food poisoning. It happens rarely but it does happen. The attending physician reports the matter and your Federal Food and Drug Inspectors are immediately on the job. Not that they can save the life already lost but perhaps they can save many more lives if they act quickly. The attending physician is interrupted in his office hour by an insistent demand for an immediate interview. He is requested to furnish specific details of the symptoms and diagnosis. First, and most important, double vision; next, nausea; inability to swallow; impairment of speech with accompanying marked general weakness and loss of muscular control and finally respiratory paralysis. There were no chills, no fever, no pain, no headache and in impaired consciousness. The diagnosis is definite and certain--- Botulism. If there had been an absence of double vision, absence of impairment of speech, absence of inability to swallow, absence of loss of muscular control, and if the symptoms had been vomiting, fever, abdominal pains, diarrhea, general weakness and prostration, the case would have been one of so-called ptomaine poisoning, much less serious than botulism.

Your inspector next inquires if any other member of the family is sick. The doctor replies that one additional member of the family had had a similar attack though in milder form and that he had been able to secure promptly a supply of botulinus antitoxin. This he had applied within a few hours of the on-set and his patient was well on the road to recovery. The physician knew that speed in securing the antitoxin was absolutely essential. He knew he must have the antitoxin within a few hours. The headquarters of his State Health Bureau was too far away. He must get in touch with the Health Department of a nearby large city. An airplane brings the life-saving antitoxin in time.

(over)

Your Federal Food and Drug inspector now must find the cause of the illness--the food in which the B. botulinus toxin has been produced by the bacterium known as B. botulinus. He visits the family. He determines the time when the illness began and he explains the absolute necessity for a complete revelation of all items of food served and eaten at the previous meal. No item must escape. They are all listed. Next it is determined of what items various members of the family ate. Exactly what did the deceased eat and what did the sick member of the family eat? All members of the family ate hamburger and only two out of six were made sick. Hence hamburger is eliminated. Young William ate sausage but Willie was not sick. Sausage is eliminated. Thus item after item is eliminated and finally it is determined that Mr. Jones ate canned onions and died. Uncle Ben ate canned onions, though in a small quantity, and was sick. He received the antitoxin. He recovered.

And so your Food and Drug inspector determines that canned onions caused the sickness. Next he must find the can. It was thrown into the garbage can and removed that morning to the garbage dump.-- He has been advised of the brand name.-- The driver of the garbage truck tells him where that load was dumped.-- He combs the garbage dump and finds the can.-- It is tested and Botulinus bacteria are confirmed.-- Your inspector's work is not yet finished.-- He proceeds to the City Health Department. He tells his story. The store from which the canned onions had been bought is visited. All remaining cans are embargoed from sale and destroyed.

Your Federal Food and Drug Inspector's work is still not yet done. He determines where the retail grocer bought the onions and he visits the wholesaler and then the importer or packer, as the case may be, and he determines where each and every can of that particular lot has been distributed and he takes immediate action to prevent the sale of and distribution of all cans from the same lot.

Now the pity of this situation is that Mrs. Jones has admitted that when she opened the can of onions, she noticed an abnormal odor but still she used the product. My friends, you should never eat food that is abnormal in any way. If cans of foods are swollen or rusty, discard them. Discard them if they have springing, flipping or swelling lids. Throw away without tasting any food from glass jars showing leaks around the rubber rings, cloudiness of liquid, spurting of contents when the bottle is opened. Let me urge you never to taste preserved food about which there is any doubt. If there is a doubt, throw it away. If foods have an off-odor, throw them away and let me urge you to use your noses for the purpose for which they were given to you, that is to smell with. Unfortunately it is considered impolite for one to smell one's food before eating it. This is all wrong.

The house guest should be invited to reassure himself by smelling the food which is offered to him and this should be not only a polite but also a usual custom in every home.-- Why do you suppose the nose was placed in the position it is---directly over the mouth? Is it not because it was intended to be a watch-dog of the stomach? Then why not make it an effective protective agency of the stomach? I state this proposition in this way in order to emphasize the value of smelling your foods before you serve and eat them.



The outline I have given you of the procedure by your Federal Food and Drug inspectors in food poisoning cases tells just exactly what is done when such occasions arise. In 1928 a death from Botulism occurred in the City of Chicago and the victim's brother was saved by the prompt administration of antitoxin. The causative agent was determined to be Italian canned shallots sometimes called onions. The product had been imported from Italy and when examined at the port of entry was found to be apparently pure and wholesome. Evidently the Botulinus poison developed after receipt in United States because of contamination with *Bacillus botulinus*. Procedure similar to that I have outlined was followed with the closest cooperation of city and state health officials with the Federal Food and Drug inspectors. All distributed lots of this brand were located in many, many scattered cities including Chicago, Denver, Providence, Brooklyn, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse and many others and more than 24,000 cans were rounded up and destroyed. Prompt destruction of these cans probably prevented many deaths.

My friends, this recitation need not alarm you nor cause you to forego the use of canned foods. As a matter of fact, home canned foods have been more frequently responsible for Botulinus poisoning than have factory canned foods. Your State and Federal officials are so far as is humanly possible guarding your food supply against *B. Botulinus* contamination and the canning industry in the United States is on such a high plane and operate generally in such satisfactory sanitary conditions that it is very unlikely that serious food poisoning cases can result from the consumption of canned foods. I want to reassure you on this point. Now, for your own protection let me say that thoroughly cooked foods do not cause Botulism. Moreover, food spoilage of this character usually produces bad odors, causes fermentation, cloudiness of liquid or other signs. Again let me warn you to discard any abnormal package of food and to use your noses for the purpose the Almighty intended them to be used.

Dr. A. C. Hunter, an expert of the Food and Drug Administration has laid down certain fundamental rules for the prevention of Botulism.

1. Use only clean, sound, raw materials when canning or preserving.
2. Follow the most recent instructions regarding processing when sterilizing the product.
3. Discard all doubtful cans and doubtful glass containers.
4. Carefully examine all foods for signs of spoilage.
5. Before tasting, boil thoroughly all doubtful foods.

My friends, I am endeavoring to make you intelligent label readers and discriminating buyers of foods. If you have missed a single one of my twenty talks, you may secure copies of my Read-the-Label information for the asking. I have talked about labels on tea, cheese, flavoring extracts. I have told you the meaning of the little purple stamp on meat and I have covered many other products besides. My talk on vitamins, as well as a copy of today's talk on Botulism, should be in the hands of every housewife of the United States.

This is a Government activity in your interest, endeavoring to give you information to make you more intelligent, more careful, more discriminating, more exacting, more economical buyers. Write to W. R. M. Wharton, United States Department of Agriculture, 201 Varick Street, New York City, for a complete set of all of these talks and they will be mailed to you without any charge whatsoever.

Next week at this hour I will be with you again. I thank you.